

Sustainability Strategy 2030

A College for people, planet and prosperity



Your College, Your Future

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Sustainability Strategy 2030

A College for people, planet and prosperity

Foreword

As we look ahead to 2030, we face numerous challenges as a society, as a College and as individuals. Human activity has already significantly warmed the climate and depleted nature, and we are feeling the impact of this climate change through more frequent and severe extreme weather. These are trends which will only worsen. All this comes against a backdrop of growing inequalities and financial uncertainty in Scotland and globally.

The need for transformative action to make our communities and institutions more sustainable has never been greater. This Sustainability Strategy outlines how Borders College will deliver change on campus and beyond, for our communities across the Scottish Borders, Scotland, the UK and the planet.

Looking beyond 2030, we recognise the importance of embedding sustainability into long-term thinking, innovation, and decision-making. This strategy is not only a response to immediate challenges, but a foundation for resilient, future-focused development that will guide us through the decades ahead.

In contributing to the Scottish Government's 2045 target to achieve **net zero**, when the amount of greenhouse gas emissions we put into the atmosphere and the amount

we take out equal zero, we also align to the more ambitious targets agreed by Scotland's Colleges. Underpinned by the [Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges](#) and published in 2021, the Scottish Colleges' [Statement of Commitment to the Climate Emergency](#), commits colleges in Scotland to achieving net zero by 2040. This Sustainability Strategy represents a major step forward in delivering on that ambition and I look forward to seeing the plans become reality.

Strategic Objectives

To provide a consistent approach to sustainability, we continue to work towards the Strategic Objectives identified in our original Sustainability Strategy:

- **Influence positive, sustainable behaviours across the wider community.**



- **Develop awareness of, and implement, good sustainable practice in all of our learning programmes.**
- **Promote sustainable innovation and the adoption of technological breakthroughs with our employers and students.**
- **Adopt best ethical, sustainable and social practice in our operations and supply chain.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pete Smith', written in a cursive style.

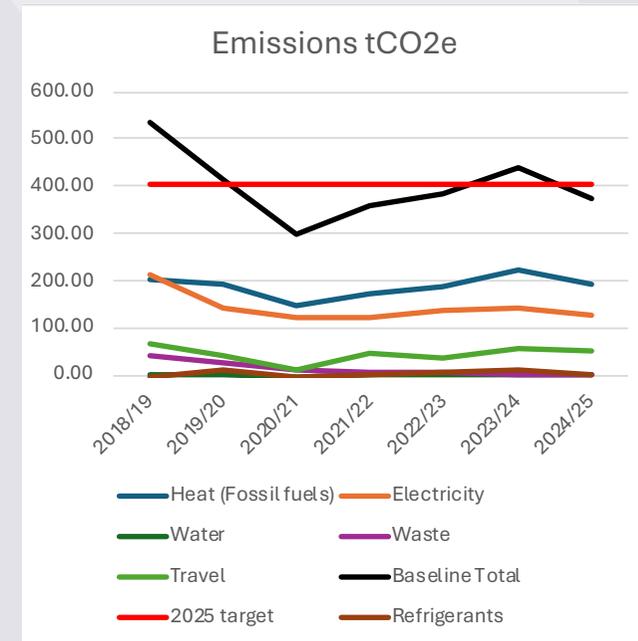
Pete Smith, Principal and CEO

Our Sustainability Journey

This Sustainability Strategy follows our track record of ambitious sustainability projects and initiatives:

2010	Published our first carbon management plan
2015	Submitted our first Public Bodies Climate Change Duties emissions report - setting our emissions baseline for targets
	Published our second Carbon management Plan
2016	Installed the UK's first sewage heat recovery heat pump and solar panels at Galashiels campus
2017	Won the Best Newcomer Award at the UK & Ireland Green Gown Awards
	Added the first electric cars to our fleet
2020	Published our first Sustainability Strategy
2021	Adopted the Scottish College's Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency
2022	Entered a Shared Services Agreement with two other institutions and EAUC to increase staff support for sustainability
	Won the 2030 Climate Action Category at UK & Ireland Green Gown Awards
	Listed among Great Place to Work's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing for the first time
2023	Won the Climate Action Category at the International Green Gown Awards
	Completed the first audit of our curriculum against the SDGs to establish a baseline for improvement
	Became one of the first colleges in Scotland to implement a zero-to-landfill policy
	Replaced our remaining internal combustion engine cars with electric vehicles
2024	Became the first college in Scotland to own an electric utility-terrain vehicle
	Participated in the SDG Teach In for the first time
	Galashiels Campus awarded Cycling Friend Campus status by Cycling Scotland
2025	Began offering free Retrofit Skills Training to businesses in the Scottish Borders
	Published our second Sustainability Strategy

During this time, the College has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions, exceeding our previous Sustainability Strategy's target to cut emissions to 50% of our 2015 baseline by 2025, by reducing this to 46% during the 2024-25 academic year.



The Sustainable Development Goals

Truly sustainable practice involves more than just a focus on climate or environmental issues – it must consider social and financial factors. To guide our approach to sustainability, Borders College will align with the United Nation’s [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) wherever possible. As an [SDG Accord](#) signatory we will report annually to track progress and our contribution to the SDGs. Each action area within this Sustainability Strategy has been mapped to the key SDGs it addresses, to demonstrate the diversity of actions taken across the College.

The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States.



Net Zero Targets

Borders College aims to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, per the [Statement of Commitment to the Climate Emergency](#).

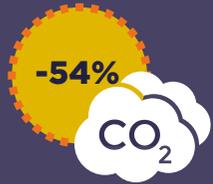
Through this Strategy, **Borders College will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6% by 2030* totalling a 60% reduction against our 2014-15 baseline.** This target includes emissions from:

- Electricity
 - Waste
 - Water
 - Refrigerant gases
 - Natural gas & heating oil
 - Business travel
 - Homeworking
-
- We will record progress in our [Public Bodies Climate Change Duties](#) reports, on the College [website](#) and as a [Race to Zero](#) for Universities and Colleges signatory. 2030 targets will be assessed against figures for the 2030-31 academic year.
 - We will record emissions we have less control over, e.g. supply chain, and may set future targets for these in line with sector guidance.

- We will focus on reducing emissions rather than offsetting or insetting – which will only be considered for unavoidable emissions after our 2040 target.
- The Sustainability Strategy will be reviewed annually and targets may be adjusted if required.

This Strategy has been prepared prior to a significant estates rationalization. While this will reduce the College's campuses, it will increase the overall floor area and so emissions in the short term will increase. These targets assume there will be no further significant changes to operations and that no major estates decarbonization projects will take place without significant changes to the availability of government funding.





We have **reduced** our carbon emissions by **54%** since 2014



Net Zero:
We are responding to the climate challenge through a series of innovative projects and organisational behavioural change.

Finance

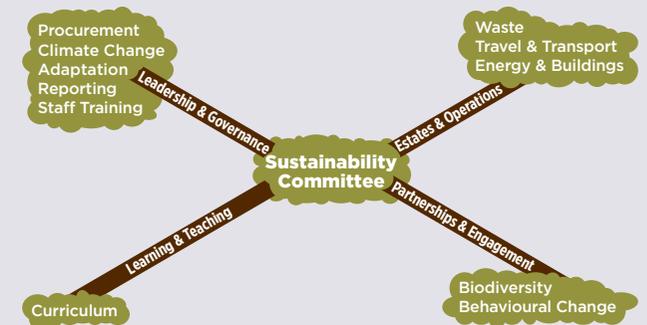
The Scottish college sector faces a challenging financial landscape. As a result, any large-scale sustainability projects depend on the availability of external funding. To account for this uncertainty, this Strategy instead focusses on fostering sustainable practice within College operations and any significant projects, e.g. low carbon heating, will be of additional benefit. It is worth noting that, although they can incur costs, many

sustainability initiatives promote efficiency and deliver financial savings. For example, solar panels at the Galashiels Campus generate savings and some income which can be reinvested. The College holds no direct financial investments but is an Admitted Employer to the Scottish Borders Council Pension Fund. The Fund has already divested itself of fossil fuels in line with its Responsible Investment Policy.

Governance

Delivery of this Sustainability Strategy and its associated Action Plan is the responsibility of the College's Sustainability Committee, which is comprised of staff from across the College, Borders College Students' Association and a representative from the College Board. The Sustainability Committee meets quarterly and provides an annual report to the College

Board. Sustainability is also a standing item at Senior Leadership Team, Wider Leadership Team, Finance & Resources Committee and Board meetings. Working groups and individual leads within the Sustainability Committee will have responsibility for specific areas of this Strategy:



Partnerships & Engagement

Biodiversity



Biodiversity—the variety of life on Earth—is essential to the health of our planet, society and well-being. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is key to our sustainability ambition.

Borders College has offered a range of land-based programmes for many years, in Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Care and Countryside Skills. Through these

Behaviour Change



If we are to be successful in our sustainability ambition, action needs to take place beyond the College’s boundaries and we must embrace our role as a regional influencer. Through behaviour change initiatives

programmes we have a long history of enhancing the natural environment and considering biodiversity, particularly as the importance of biodiversity has become more widely recognised. Over the course of this Strategy **Borders College will further integrate biodiversity topics into courses throughout our curriculum.** Despite having limited outdoor spaces, we have tried to maximise opportunities for biodiversity enhancements on our campuses by:

- Participating in [No Mow May](#)
- Installing bug hotels and hedgehog houses

with students and staff we will encourage sustainable practices beyond our campuses. Behavioural change involves encouraging and supporting individuals and communities to adopt more sustainable lifestyles, habits, and values. In doing so, we address topics such as Health & Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, stretching beyond the scope of environmental sustainability. Current initiatives include our:

- [Active Campus Programme](#)

- Planting trees and hedges
- Planting a wildflower meadow

To monitor these improvements and to identify remaining opportunities, **Borders College will complete a biodiversity assessment of our campuses to act as a baseline for future action.** Given space limitations on our campuses, **Borders College will continue to work with local partners to improve biodiversity on sites across the Scottish Borders.**

- **Wellbeing Day & Wellbeing Hour**
- **Sustainability & Equalities Calendars**
- [Best Workplaces for Wellbeing status](#)

To enhance the delivery and monitoring of behaviour change initiatives Borders College will progress a structured approach by **developing and implementing a measurable Behavioural Change Framework by 2026.**

Leadership & Governance

Procurement



Our supply chain is both a significant contributor to our emissions and ecological footprint, and an opportunity to work with our suppliers to promote sustainable practice. To embed sustainability will develop

a new Responsible Procurement Policy to expand decision making from financial considerations, supported by a programme of staff training.

Borders College is working with Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges (APUC), the procurement centre of expertise for Scotland’s universities and colleges, to deliver on the [Scottish University and College Sectors – Supply Chain Climate & Ecological](#)

[Emergency Strategy 2022 to 2030](#). Through APUC the College uses frameworks to procure as many goods and services as possible from suppliers committed to the [Sustain Supply Chain Code of Conduct](#).

Borders College will increase the share of products and services procured via sustainable national frameworks to 70% by 2030.

Climate Change Adaptation



While it is important to reduce greenhouse emissions, our climate is already changing and will continue to do so because of historic emissions. It is crucial that we adapt College operations to the extreme weather and other impacts we can anticipate from climate change.

The College has a duty to support the [Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3 \(SNAP3\)](#) and will contribute to:

- Regional and place-based collaborations
- Public service and infrastructure resilience
- Public body duties and capacity
- Economic development and supply chains

Our sector-leading Climate Change Risk Assessment identified flooding and storms as key risks to the College, with impacts

on transport and off-campus infrastructure being particularly problematic. Other risks include increasing temperatures and changing growing seasons. Our experience developing this Risk Assessment was recognised as a case study in EAUC’s [Climate Risk Register & Tool](#).

By 2030 Borders College will have reached the ‘Mature’ category of actions in Adaptation Scotland’s [Climate Adaptation Capability Framework](#).

Reporting



Borders College has completed annual [Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting](#) since 2015. This involves recording the

College's emissions from the previous academic year, as well as how climate action has been addressed in governance, procurement, adaptation and wider influence. All reports to the Regional Board and its Committees include the implications and considerations of the report on sustainability and the environment. This provides a useful opportunity to assess

progress and will be used to monitor delivery of this Sustainability Strategy.

Borders College will comply with statutory expectations to complete Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting of all relevant emission sources and will maintain a high level of reporting quality, reflected by sector analysis.

Staff Knowledge



Embedding sustainable practice across Borders College will require buy-in from staff from the whole institution. It is therefore crucial that our staff are equipped with the awareness, confidence, and skills needed to make informed decisions and take

responsible actions to bring about transformative change.

Our staff already receive an overview of relevant sustainability and climate change topics as part of their induction and we have begun to integrate sustainability further into other training modules, such as Health, Safety and Environment – focussing on compliance and environmental responsibility in operations. Further materials are available to staff through the College Intranet.

To expand and improve the training offered to staff Borders College will:

- **Develop an annual programme of sustainability CPD for all staff.**
- **Formalise staff participation in at least 2 relevant climate/sustainability networks.**
- **Establish internal Sustainability Champions across all departments and Borders College Students' Association.**

Learning & Teaching



As an education institution we have a responsibility to equip students not only with the knowledge and skills for the workplace, but also with the values and mindset needed

Curriculum Mapping

To guide our approach to ESD, we completed a curriculum mapping exercise to benchmarking provision against the SDGs. This will baseline our future work, identifying

SDG Teach In

To demonstrate how sustainability aligns with our teaching we participated in the [SDG Teach In](#) for the first time in 2024. **Borders**

Sustainability Skills Survey

We also want to better understand what our students learn and think about sustainability as part of their time at the college. We participated in the annual SOS-UK

to thrive in a rapidly changing world. We are committed to embedding sustainability across all aspects of learning and teaching, guided by best practices in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)—referred to in Scotland as Learning for Sustainability (LfS).

Education for Sustainable Development empowers learners with the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed to

strengths and opportunities to further integrate sustainability across subject areas. Measuring progress against this baseline, **Borders College will equip all students with**

College will take part in the SDG Teach In annually and will expand the number of students and staff involved, with over 50

Sustainability Skills Survey for the first time in 2024, with SOS-UK sharing our students' responses with us. To ensure our continued access to this data in the long-term, **Borders**

make informed decisions that benefit the environment, economy, and society. It encourages critical thinking, responsible citizenship, and a commitment to building a more just and sustainable future for all. ESD/LfS is becoming increasingly prevalent in frameworks and standards relevant to the College sector, which require institutions to take action to deliver.

an understanding of how their course relates to sustainable development by addressing relevant SDGs as part of each course.

staff pledging to take part by 2030.

College will aim for over 100 responses in the annual Sustainability Skills Survey, and will use the data to evaluate our progress and inform next steps.

Our learners and community

Contributing to community life is at the heart of many of our programmes, from horticulture students working with local groups to green our towns, to hair and beauty students visiting our care homes. We believe this type of experience enriches both the learning experience and the lives of our citizens.

Skills for Net Zero

While we will embed sustainability throughout all teaching, we also have a responsibility to train the workforce needed to deliver Scotland's net zero transition. To support the green economy, we have developed a range of programmes of study:

- Domestic Retrofit
- Renewable Technology
- Electric Vehicle Charge Point Installation
- Domestic Ventilation

- Sustainable Construction and Ventilation
- Heat Pumps
- Unvented Hot Water
- Water Bylaws

Building on this success, **Borders College will continue to deliver a range of programmes of study in response to the green economy according to the skills demand of the local supply chain to provide a future ready workforce.**



Estates & Operations

Waste



Reducing resource use and waste is something all staff, students and partners should contribute to. Waste reduction conserves natural resources, reduces emissions, and lessens the impact of disposal. Our approach is guided by the [Waste Hierarchy](#), which emphasises reuse and recycling over other forms of disposal – after confirming that a resource is needed in the first place.

It is crucial that waste is disposed of correctly, to ensure that it can be recycled or used to its full potential and we will continue to work with students and staff to encourage them to manage their waste appropriately.

We have taken action at an institutional level by removing single use hot drinks cups from

campus catering and achieving zero waste to landfill.

Borders College will reduce the total volume of waste produced by 5% by 2030. While we anticipate the upcoming estates rationalisation will generate additional waste in the short term, we believe it is important to continue to strive to reduce operational waste through a target which remains ambitious in this context.

To ensure that our waste is properly managed, **Borders College will maintain or exceed recycling rates above 80%.**

Energy & Buildings



Our campuses are crucial to our work, however, they generate a significant

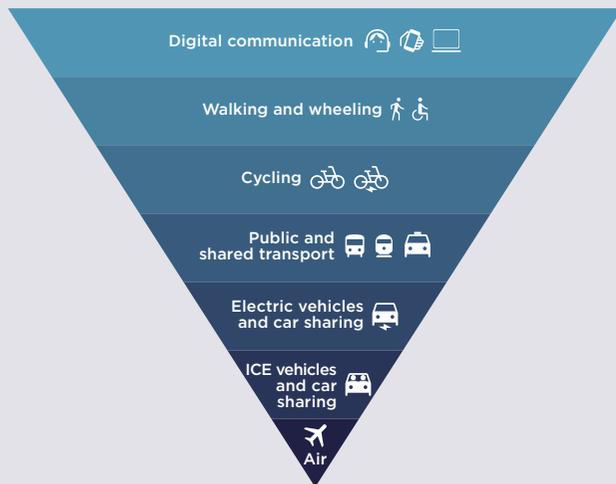
portion of our emissions through heating, electricity and water use. Reducing these will be essential to achieving our targets, while lowering energy costs and creating a healthier, more efficient learning environment.

We have already begun to reduce our buildings' emissions, including by installing the first wastewater heat pump system in the UK at our Galashiels campus. We have undertaken studies to identify solutions to replace gas heating as we work toward the public sector's 2038 target for zero direct

emissions from buildings. Delivery of these solutions will depend on the availability of external funding.

Borders College is about to undertake a significant estates rationalization, including consolidation into the Galashiels Campus. This may reduce some emissions, e.g. by

Travel & Transport



To achieve net zero and transition to a healthier, happier society we need to fundamentally change how and when we

reducing inter-campus travel, but will increase the College's total floor area. Through these changes, we will seek efficiencies where possible, e.g. changing opening hours to better reflect learner needs but it is possible our buildings' emissions may increase in the short term. Uncertainty over the availability of external funding for

travel to more sustainable means. Business travel and commuting are significant sources of emissions reported by the College.

Our approach follows the [Sustainable Travel Hierarchy](#), which prioritises active travel and public transport over car use. Before planning travel, staff should question whether travel is necessary at all – can a meeting or conference could be attended remotely instead? When travel is required, staff should not fly within the mainland UK, as aviation is the most carbon-intensive mode of transport.

We have taken steps to encourage sustainable travel by promoting the Under 22s Free Bus Travel Scheme and upgrading all our pool cars to electric vehicles. Resources supporting cycling include:

- Covered cycle parking
- Storage lockers
- Staff Cycle to Work Scheme

projects make it difficult to predict what projects will be deliverable during this Strategy. Instead of setting specific targets, our buildings will support our overall targets and **we will deliver estates rationalisation as efficiently as possible, to minimise the impact on energy and utilities use.**

- Student and staff shower facilities
- Changing facilities

More needs to be done to encourage sustainable travel, both institutionally and individually through behaviour change.

Borders College will replace our remaining internal combustion engine vehicles with zero emission alternatives by 2030, subject to the availability of vehicles capable of fulfilling these roles and finance.

By 2030 Borders College will achieve (compared to 2022-23):

- ↓ **50% staff and student commuting emissions.**
- ↑ **10% commuting by active travel.**
- ↑ **10% commuting by public transport.**
- ↓ **30% business travel emissions.**
- ↓ **20% single occupancy car journeys to campuses.**

Key Partners

	<p>EAUC (the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges) is the leading body for sustainability in post-16 education. Borders College's EAUC membership allows access to communities of practice on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Climate Risks • Education for Sustainable Development • Circular Economy • Waste • Transport • Energy & Water • Transport • Biodiversity 		<p>APUC (Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges) is the procurement centre of expertise for Scotland's universities and colleges. Together with EAUC they run a Sustainable Procurement Networking Cafe</p>
	<p>The Adaptation Scotland programme provides advice and support to help Scotland be prepared and resilient to the effects of climate change, supporting the College through The Public Sector Climate Adaptation Network</p>		<p>ESP (Energy Skills Partnership) is the college sector agency in Scotland for energy transition, zero carbon transport, engineering, construction and STEM whilst leading on the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan</p>
	<p>College Development network (CDN) is the national agency in Scotland that supports skills and sector development across colleges and vocational learning. CDN supports sustainability through guidance and resources, including the Statement of Commitment to the Climate Emergency</p>		<p>The Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) is Scotland's public sector network on sustainability and climate change and is responsible for administering Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting</p>
			<p>Education Scotland is the national body for supporting quality and improvement of learning and teaching in Scottish education. They provide strategic support and guidance on Learning for Sustainability</p>



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Credits

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Borders College and
NC Art and Design students.

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